

Fort McHenry National Monument and Historic Shrine

State of the Park Report Fiscal Year 2001

Overview/Summary of Progress

During 2001 Fort McHenry accomplished an innovative **greening program** to improve the park's environment. With the use of this region's first Department of Energy/GSA Area-wide Agreement we initiated a Green Energy contract with Constellation Energy Group, the parent company of Baltimore Gas and Electric. This project has enabled the park to demonstrate our environmental conservation ethic through: installation of photovoltaic street lighting; passive solar skylighting in a retrofitted building recycled from Gettysburg; a ventilation system which recycles exhaust air to retain heat; energy-efficient HVAC; conversion of Cushman vehicles to natural gas and installation of a slow-flow natural gas fueling station. The park will interpret this project to the public via wayside exhibits which are under development with Constellation Energy. These efforts supported the park's designation in 2001 as a **National Park Service Center for Environmental Innovation**.

We were pleased to welcome new Chief Ranger Charlie Strickfaden who arrived at the park from Sequoia National Park in August.

Planning

In 2001 planning began for **the Rehabilitate Historic Seawall Line-Item Construction project** via meetings with cultural resources advisors, State Historic Preservation Office and park staff. Planning will continue in 2002 with natural resources advisors to address resource compliance needs, followed by its advertisement as a design/build project.

Park staff continue to participate in and host monthly and public meetings for **the Star-Spangled Banner National Historic Trail Study** team. In order to gain a broader perspective of the importance of the trail, we also helped host an international "Historian's Roundtable" in April (with 70 attendees), which was moderated by National Park Service Chief Historian Dwight Pitcaithley. The team's draft Statement of Significance and Significance Determination will be reviewed by the Regional Director and Washington Office in the coming months in preparation for its presentation to the NPS Director's Advisory Council. Staff have also continued to actively participate in The Revolutionary War and War of 1812 Historic Preservation Study spearheaded by the American Battlefield Protection Program office and the Smithsonian Institution's Star-Spangled Banner conservation project.

New Partnerships

Partnerships are an important part of how we will accomplish more with less at parks now and in the future. Fort McHenry had a banner year creating new and formalizing existing partnerships that will increase our ability to reach goals, improve our visibility in the community and work more closely with regional partners. The following describe these new partnerships:

- ♦ **Chesapeake Bay Gateways Partnership** – In 2001 Fort McHenry was designated a CBGP Site and worked with other non-profit partners to successfully apply for a CBGPs grant of over \$9,000 to support interpretation of the Chesapeake Bay maritime history.
- ♦ **Pride of Baltimore, Inc.** – In 2001 Fort McHenry entered into a Cooperative Agreement with the Pride to share staffing skills and increase the interpretation of the War of 1812 at both the park and onboard this reconstructed 1812 vessel.
- ♦ **National Aquarium in Baltimore** – In 2001 Fort McHenry entered into a Cooperative Agreement with the Aquarium to share staffing to monitor and clean an adjoining tidal wetlands and interpret the environment of the Chesapeake Bay.

- ◆ **U.S. Coast Guard Cutter JAMES RANKIN** – In 2001 Fort McHenry entered into a Memorandum of Understanding with the JAMES RANKIN. The MOU identifies opportunities for both parties to increase interpretation of the War of 1812 and writing of the Star-Spangled Banner.

Our ongoing partnership with the Patriots of Fort McHenry/Living Classrooms Foundation continued and they provided the park with approximately \$15,000 of support in 2001. A new fundraising event was initiated by the Patriots in 2001 and for the first annual Francis Scott Key Award luncheon they honored Congressman Benjamin Cardin for his long record of support to Fort McHenry.

Resource Stewardship

In 2001 the park made excellent progress on the **Rehabilitate Star Fort Phase III** (FOMC 276C) Line-Item Construction project. Accomplishments included work by a local minority-owned firm to complete masonry repairs and install a waterproof membrane material on underground structures in the Outer Battery and Bombproofs. In addition, the National Park Service's Historic Preservation Training Center repaired and repointed 1,100 linear feet of the park's historic boundary wall, bringing it from "poor" to "good" condition on the List of Classified Structures. Remaining work on this project was delayed when it was found that the below-grade portions of the Sally Port ramp were highly deteriorated. This will require archeological investigation and cultural resource compliance before repairs of this feature can be completed.

Environmental Audit recommendations were addressed by the revision of the Park Hazard Communication Plan, proper disposal of park-generated hazardous waste, establishment of recycling programs for printer cartridges, automotive batteries, fluorescent light tubes and NiCad batteries. The park also acquired flammable storage cabinets for a variety of materials as recommended in the audit.

During 2001 the park completed installation of a split rail fence around the Star Fort. The fence lays out the historic area, controls fee access and gives visitors a better view of what the fort looked like at the time of the battle. The HVAC system at the Visitor Center that had been plagued with frequent breakdowns under peak load was replaced and the new system has proved to be reliable and efficient. Foundation markers were repaired/repointed and grading adjusted to protect them from mowing operations and vehicular traffic. Missing brick and lost sections of markers were replaced so that they can once again be used as an interpretive tool.

Fort McHenry staff continue to work with the National Aquarium in Baltimore and other partners to clean up, restore and monitor the adjacent tidal wetlands site. The wetland is clearly visible to park visitors from an overlook on park grounds and provides a unique opportunity to interpret the importance of tidal wetlands and Chesapeake Bay ecology to the public. These efforts to heighten environmental awareness at Fort McHenry have helped us to broaden interpretation of the park to include our role in the Chesapeake Bay Environment and helped lead to the park's 2001 designation as **an NPS Chesapeake Bay Gateways Network (CBGN) site**. To increase the educational impact of the wetland, a partnership among the park, the Aquarium and the Chesapeake Bay Program is underway to install wayside exhibits to interpret the importance and function of tidal wetlands as well as the history of the site. The design of the exhibit was completed by the CBGN office and sent to contractors for production. The exhibit should be installed by the summer of 2002.

Using volunteers, partners and day labor the park worked with the National Aquarium at Baltimore to complete four quarterly cleanups of the tidal wetlands area, two of which included cleanups of the park's historic seawall. A total of 294 volunteers and staff collected 220 tons of trash and debris in 2001. Toyota sponsored a group of 61 volunteers for a September 29th National Public Lands Day event at the park, and Unilever sponsored a "Recycling at Work Day" event with 137 volunteers during the June 2 cleanup.

Once again we improved storage and display conditions for our museum collections and library archives. A new computer system, microfilm reader/printer and numerous books were purchased and 61 reels of original microfilm from the library collection were duplicated. Numerous maps and documents were copied and encapsulated and extensive research was done on two research databases to facilitate visitor

genealogical requests. The park was fortunate to purchase an original 1809 French 36-pound naval gun with the help of a donation from the Maryland Arms Collecting Association. This cannon, typical of those utilized here in 1814, will be placed on the site of the original 1814 Water Battery along with four other naval guns and carriages that were donated to the park by the *USS Constellation*.

Archeological excavation, monitoring and reporting continued in 2001, and the park's *Archeological Overview* was completed and printed. The park's temporary archeologist assisted with the preparations and coordination of raising long-lost traverse stones (from the fort's gun emplacements) from the water off the park boundary with the Maryland Underwater Services and Maryland Historical Trust. The archeologist also continued to implement a GIS program at the park and this data was used to assist with research and compliance on a number of projects in 2001.

Resource Education

Work on new exhibits for the Star Fort, which began in 1998, continued this year. The primary focus was on planning, research and design of the D Building Archaeology exhibit. The combination of more accurately furnished rooms and other interpretive exhibits has greatly improved our ability to tell the story of Fort McHenry's role in the Battle of Baltimore. Fee demonstration monies will support continuing efforts to improve additional exhibits in the Star Fort in 2002.

In 2001, Ranger staff offered a broad range of talks focusing on park themes to an audience of over 663,000 visitors. Visitor satisfaction with park facilities and visitor understanding of the park's significance was outstanding this year. Visitor survey results showed that we are doing a good job of providing visitors with facilities and services that meet or exceed their expectations (100%) and that many visitors (67%) come away from a visit to Fort McHenry grasping the site's importance as part of our American heritage.

An exciting addition to the park's living history program was the acquisition of a reproduction 1812 six-pound Gribeauval Field gun with carriage for live demonstrations. Park rangers and living history volunteers continued to provide valuable support and off-site programs to partners such as the *Pride of Baltimore II*, the *USS Constellation* and a myriad of local and state historical associations. As in the past, the park hosted over 70,000 school children, during educational field trips to the park, and once again participated in the annual Star-Spangled Banner Public Service Announcement design contest.

In the wake of the September 11 terrorist attacks, the park's visitation rose over 1,000 visitors in September and park rangers found renewed public interest in its primary theme, The Star-Spangled Banner, as well as flag information and patriotic themes in general.

Annual special events on-site occurred on Flag Day (4,000 visitors), Living American Flag Day, Civil War Weekend (11,000 visitors) and the Star-Spangled Banner/Defender's Day Weekend (9,400 visitors). The park also held two summer tattoo ceremonies and President Bush visited the park once enroute to a meeting in Baltimore.

Volunteers

Volunteer-In-Parks (VIPs) contributed 24,314 hours (an increase of 25% over 2000 figures), the equivalent of 11.6 full-time staff members, due in part to a successful recruiting program. Once again this remains a strong point in the park's interpretive and visitor service program. Fort McHenry volunteers remain dedicated to the mission of the park and eager to share with the visiting public. Living history volunteers helped train staff of the tall ship *Pride of Baltimore II* in living history interpretation and had the opportunity to work together when the ship docked at the park and other areas on the Chesapeake Bay.

A new living history unit, the U.S. Chesapeake Flotilla, was begun under a \$9,300 grant from the National Park Service Chesapeake Bay Gateways Network (through the Patriots of Fort McHenry). This will allow the park to interpret this important maritime military unit and its role on the Chesapeake during the Battle of Baltimore.

Volunteers were very active in community outreach and performed over 50 off-site programs for schools, civic organizations and clubs. As in past years, the volunteers assisted in operating the visitor center during spring seasonal/staff training weeks.

Final Note/2002 Goals

In-house planning has begun to review ideas for the 2012-2014 anniversary of the War of 1812. We plan to meet with partners in 2002 to discuss long-range plans for this important event. It is hoped that construction of a new Education/Visitor Services and Administration building (est. \$10,124,150) will be complete in time for the anniversary celebration, and completing the planning and site selection for that project is our primary goal for 2002.

Other high priorities for 2002 include treating three historic buildings in the Star Fort for lead paint (\$75,000), installing a sewer line for the Civil War Powder Magazine and Shop (\$125,000), replacing an outdated HVAC system in one historic Star Fort building (\$50,000) and completing the parkwide green energy conservation project (\$50,000). Interpretive goals include completion of the park's Comprehensive Interpretive Plan and the archeology exhibit in the Star Fort.